

## Odd Christmas Beliefs

INDIANS say that the best time to catch a deer is on Christmas night at 12 o'clock, when they believe the deer kneels.

Some of the Germans believe that those born on Christmas day have the power of seeing spirits and even commanding them.

A popular saying in Spain for Christmas day is, "The bird of dawn singeth all night long to frighten away all evil things."

In Roumania it is the custom to bless the Danube at Christmas, and a procession consisting of priests and people dressed to represent Biblical characters moves through the streets singing chants, and so to the banks of the river. The ice is broken and a small wooden cross thrown into the water. Any one who can recover the cross is regarded as extremely fortunate and sure of good luck for the remainder of the year.

Christmas celebrations in Mexico begin Dec. 17 and continue until Dec. 24. Each night a festival is held, nine in all, an invitation being sent out to these "posadas." "Posada" means "inn," typifying the way the holy travelers, Joseph and Mary, sought in vain for rest and shelter.

## On the Trail

I PEEKED around a bit last night. I thought I'd like to get a sight Of old man Santa Claus. I come a-sneakin' down the stair And hid behind the parlor chairs, As still as two small baby bears With butter on their paws.

I sat, and sat, and sat, and sat, All scrunched up like a Hottentot, And skursely breathed at all, 'Twas awful dark and kind o' weird, And as the hours disappeared I felt myself a-gettin' skeered At noises in the hall.

And nen old Sandy hove in view. He wore a shaggy coat and two Big goggles on his eyes. He wore a pair of motor mitts As fuzzy as a pussy kit's And wool cap like my mother knits For daddykin's surprise.

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He whispered once or twice, and nen  
He cackled like a settin' hen  
Or like a rooster does.  
"He'll never know me now!" said he  
While fixin' up the Christmas tree.  
But old man Sandy can't fool me—  
I knew just who he was!  
—Carlyle Smith in Denver Republican.

## A Christmas Church

GIVE me a snug, little church, dressed for the holidays in greens, wreaths of holly, long hanging garlands of ground pine and laurel, perhaps rather awkwardly, but none the less lovingly, arranged by interested church members, not by a hired florist, and filling the building with the breath of outdoors.

I want some trees on the pulpit and high overhead a blazing star of fire, shining out into the semi-twilight of the building. I want to rise in the starlighted darkness of a properly frosty Christmas morning and in everyday clothes, wearing mittens, if I choose, and my second best hat, walk briskly through quiet streets to the church and join the waiting congregation.

There won't be a crowd. There will be no display. Only a few score of those to whom Christmas means a wonderful reality will be there. And there will be congregational singing, lots of it, and we'll run the gamut of the hymns of the Nativity. We'll read the appropriate Scripture responsively and listen to the Christmas story told once again by the kindly voice of the unpretentious clergyman. — New York Evening Post.

## Turkey Not an Ancient Christmas Dish.

The turkey as a Christmas dish was introduced into England in the sixteenth century and is therefore of less antiquity than the huge sirloin of beef or the mince pie. Mince pies were first shaped like a manger, as were the Yule cakes given out by the bakers to their customers. The plum porridge later developed into the plum pudding, which dates from 1675. At the old Christmas feasts peacocks and cranes formed some of the dishes. Before being roasted the peacock was carefully skinned, and after leaving the oven the bird was reclothed with its old plumage.

## Spanish Music at Christmas.

Weird music in the home is a part of the Christmas festivities in Spain. In northern Andalusia the people play the zambomba, a flowerpot perforated by a hollow reed, which wetted and rubbed with the finger gives out a hollow, scraping, monotonous sound. In southern Andalusia the panderita or tambourine is the chief instrument.



GOOD will unto men and peace to the nations— These were the glad tidings the herald proclaimed When brightly on high, mid the vast constellations, The star over Bethlehem quivered and flamed.

THE wise men who saw it and journeyed with eager And reverent spirit, their presents to bring, It guided until by the manger so meager They kneed by the Child Christ and hailed him as King.

A NIGHT more momentous through all the long story Of earth and its races ne'er stood out in time. The rays of that star shall increase in their glory And the tidings be heard in each nation and clime.

If we follow that star through life's labyrinth dreary And look toward its light with unflinching faith, Though the ways may seem hard and our feet may grow weary, 'Twill guide us right on through the valley of death.

## The "Christmas Grouch"

THE Christmas grouch dies hard, but he begins to breathe feebly. There is scarcely a family but has a Christmas grouch—some one who thinks gifts are foolish and that a great deal of money is wasted at the season now upon us. He hates to see money wasted; he hates to see the Christmas trees cut down; he thinks it is a sin to tell the children the legend about Santa Claus; he scolds about shopping; he is sorry for the poor man who has so many bundles; he says everybody runs into debt at Christmas and that the new year gets started in all wrong on account of the debts; he says the sentiment has all gone out of Christmas on account of its being commercialized and that Christmas trees are a menace to life and that once he knew of a house that caught fire from a Christmas tree; he says it is a sin to spend money for flowers at Christmas.

The Christmas reformer has hundreds of ideas about how Christmas can be improved. He says the Christmas holidays never mean anything to him and he will be glad when they are all over.

But Christmas remains Christmas just the same, for all the grouch's protests, and will be the same forever; will laugh at the grouch and his follies in such a wholesome, hearty way that he will grow ashamed and will join in the merrymaking in spite of himself.

## PRETTY CHRISTMAS CUSTOMS.

In some of the small towns on the Riviera a curious custom takes place on Christmas eve, when at the chief church in the town, during the midnight mass, a number of shepherds from the hills make their appearance wearing the picturesque dress of their calling.

The chief shepherd carries a lamb in his arms and, advancing to the high altar, gives it to the priest as a Christmas offering from the shepherds and a symbol of the Nativity.

In some towns of southern Germany a pretty custom prevails on Christmas eve.

A veiled woman walks through the streets after nightfall, carrying a child, chosen for his beauty and goodness to personify the infant Saviour. The cottage windows are left ajar so that the representative of the Christ Child can leave some gift upon the window sill.

Every good child thus finds on Christmas morning fruit and sweets, but the bad children only receive a birch rod, typical of well deserved chastisement.

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